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ABSTRACT

Preliminary results of this study of the preconditions for pedagogical change in Swedish schools indicate that national curricular emphases have changed, but that accompanying changes in teaching methods may conceal wide variation in content and import. The study's objective was to identify the factors conducive or hostile to change in the instructional, nonadministrative activities of Sweden's nine-year comprehensive schools. The investigators had first to define which changes to study and, second, to identify preconditions for change, such as the national curriculum, teaching materials, school organization, and teachers' perceptions. Through research on historical government documents they charted the changing official views on education and, through empirical research in middle-level classes and in one senior-level school, they discovered whether officially-desired changes were taking place. Official curricular goals have changed markedly from the 1940s, moving to an emphasis on "invisible pedagogics" with looser guidelines and much greater focus on pupils' interests, experiences, and development. Changes mandated by the national curriculum in teaching methods, class organization, content, and teaching materials have taken place, but still allow wide variation in subjects studied, resources used, and depth of study. (RW)

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1981:2	The PANG Project. Process Analysis of Non-Grading.

FOCUS OF THE PROJECT

Background

The past few decades have been a period of thoroughgoing change within the Swedish school system as regards its organization and administration e.g. time schedules, teaching qualifications, the decentralization of resources and to some extent also as regards pedagogics e.g. revised syllabi and improved inservice training (INSET). The organizational and administrative changes have been relatively easy to put into effect, concerned as they are with the "outward" organization of schools. The pedagogical changes, on the other hand, relating to "internal work", have been less easy to realize. It has been established in various connections that schools have not undergone any decisive change regarding, for example, working procedures and work content, The SIA Commision[1)] was prompted by this very difficulty in achieving the disired alterations to the internal work of schools. Methods were sought whereby activities could be influenced/transformed.

The background to this project also includes the studies in which Ulf Lundgren demonstrated the dependence of teaching on outward conditions, particularly time and syllabi*, and also the debate which has taken place in Britain and the United States concerning the connection between school organization and teaching effects. Other important sources of inspiration have been the early observations of teaching and the analysis, geared to those observations, of links between official goals and manifest and latent functions in schools. In an earlier project we were concerned to interpret the implications of the official goals and to concretize those implications in the teaching context.

[1)] SIA is short for 'skolans inre arbete' which means 'the internal organization of school activities'.

* Lundgren, U. (1972). Frame factors and the teaching process.

Purpose - problems

The purpose of the project is to describe and analyse the "preconditions of change in schools", thereby increasing our knowledge of factors respectively conducive ant hostile to change.

One important premise naturally concerns the meaning of "change". Do we mean any change whatsoever, or change in a particular direction? Is the meaning of the term defined once and for all, or does it alter with the passing of time? Who defines change?

Our heading refers to "schools", but the terms of reference of the project have been confined to compulsory schooling, i.e. the nine-year comprehensive school.

Another important premise concerns the *preconditions* of change. In the course of the debate, reference has been made to the influence exerted, for example, by teachers, INSET, resources and teaching materials on the shaping of school activities. Officially, the central position of the curriculum as a governing factor in schools is frequently emphasized. One way of dealing with the question of preconditions is to try to describe the focus conveyed by official education policy and the limits imposed by rules. organization and resources. Another way is to try to understand how different groups apprehend, interpret and implement goals and rules. A third is to approach the meaning of "changed" teaching and the factors determining its design on the basis of study of concrete teaching.

Project activities have been concerned with all three of these aspects. Thus the task has been to determine the implications and content of the changes advocated by the Government and Riksdag (the latter being the Swedish Parliament) through

various policy decisions and reforms. The meaning of express aims is vitally important here, as is the relationship between the goals and the other means whereby the Government and Riksdag control schools. Goals and preconditions from the viewpoint of the protagonist are the other side of the purpose of the project. Consequently a refinement of the purpose of the project required the following:

a) analysis of the implications of change in official documents

b) studies of some of the factors constituting preconditions of school activities, especially the curriculum and teaching materials

c) a study of the implication of change and its conditions in classes where teaching corresponds to official policy according to certain criteria.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Against this background, the activities involved by the project have proceeded along two lines: firstly, theoretical work based on historical studies of documents, and secondly, empirical investigations in present day comprehensive schools.

What does change imply?

Our starting point was the question of the implication and direction of change, closely allied to which was the question as to which factors school activities are influenced by. In the ultimate analysis, educational changes in a society hinge on the political situation and are connected in various ways with the economic structure. At the same time they are influenced by the prevailing ideas concerning the role of education in society, the content and nature of knowledge and so forth.

Thus one essential task has been to try to document the official view concerning the direction and content of change. This has been done by analysing material from official in-

quiries, Government circulars and Riksdag enactments, and by analysing the goals and instructions contained in the curricula (Svingby, 1978, 1979). The main emphasis of this analysis has been on the comprehensive school curricula, but it has also included some analysis of the curricula of the unreformed elementary school (folkskola) in order to obtain a historical background to the present day focus and see "what's new".

In the context of education policy, the goals of nine-year comprehensive school have often been referred to in terms of social change; these goals have been said to be the augmentation of social equality, a spearhead into the future, and so on. A special study has been undertaken in which this idea of the social role of schools has been scrutineized in relation to the history of ideas (Öhlund, 1978), various ideas concerning the relationship between education and society being studied in their historical context.

Another way of defining change - and also of describing its conditions - is by studying concrete teaching. The official documents (e.g. Government Bills 1975/76:39 and 1978/79:180) advocate a problem-oriented working approach, relation to the needs and interests of the pupils etc., but what does this mean in the practical teaching context? Does it entail, for example, any change in the relationship between pupils, in the attitudes of teachers and pupils, in organization or in content?

A study has been made of a number of middle level classes selected because they corresponded to one of the external criteria of a change in line with official intentions (Svingby, in preparation). A second study is concerned with a special "observation school" at senior level with specific organizational preconditions (Sjögren, in preparation).

Which factors are school activities influenced by?

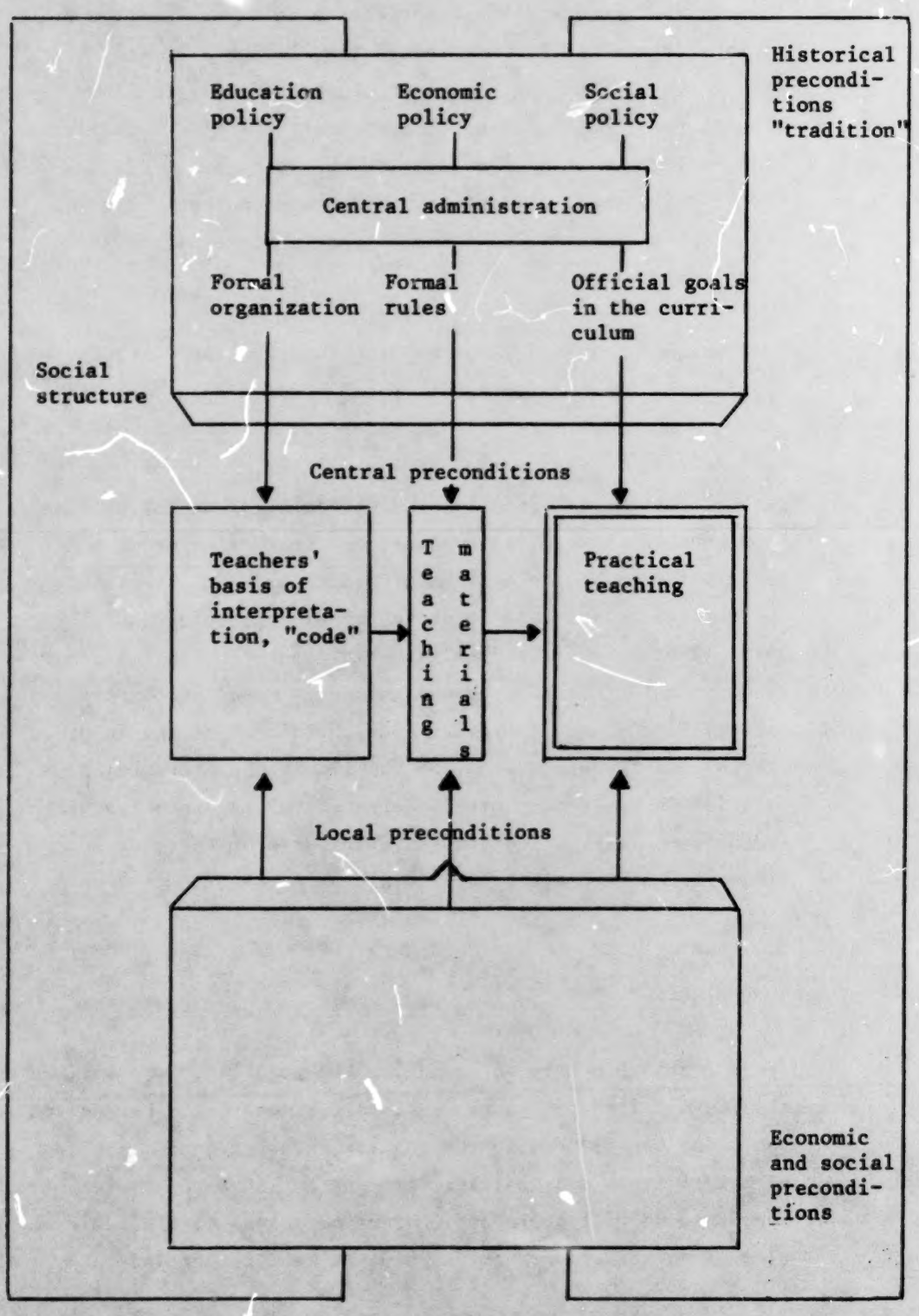
There are widely varying scientific traditions to choose from here. The psychological and socio-psychological traditions, for

example, have figured prominently in studies of teachers' attitudes towards and experience of school work. Great efforts have been devoted to studies of teachers' personalities and their teaching success. Following on from Dahllöf's studies, Lundgren and his associates have shown the importance of the "frames" (e.g. time, the course, fellow teachers, tradition) in determining the shape and content of teaching. Attention is thus focussed on the importance of the curriculum as a precondition, but also on the teachers' "codification" of the same. Callewaert and Nilsson indicated how teaching is directly and indirectly determined by the social functions of schools.

The present project follows on from the two last mentioned approaches. The main emphasis of the studies is on a scrutiny of the frames, particularly the curriculum, but they also include school organization (Svingby, 1977, 1980) and teachers' perceptions of possibilities and obstacles. Thus the studies have been to focus on an analysis of the curriculum as a central factor in the systems of limitations and directives which restrict and lend focus to school activities (Svingby 1978, 1979 and articles published in 1980). In two sub-studies, teaching materials have been examined by means of content analysis (Aspengren & Nyqvist 1980, Nordin, 1978 and in preparation) and through a study of the importance of teaching material in connection with an attempt to transform teaching (Nordin, op. cit.). The diagram overleaf will serve as an illustration of project activities.

SOME FINDINGS

It is impossible here to summarize the results of the various studies entailed by the project, partly due to limitations of space and partly because the results, consisting as they do of descriptions and analyses, are not amenable to a brief synopsis. We will therefore content ourselves with a few examples of the experience gained and the results obtained.


Historical preconditions "tradition"
Education policy
Economic policy
Social policy
Central administration
Formal organization
Formal rules
Official goals in the curriculum
Social structure
Central preconditions
Teachers' basis of interpretation, "code"
Teaching materials
Practical teaching
Local preconditions
Economic and social preconditions

The curriculum as a policy instrument

One essential part of the work of the project has been concerned with the curriculum as one of the national policy instruments establishing preconditions for teaching. The initial premise here is that the curriculum is only one of the many instruments at the disposal of the State and also that State control is only part of the conditioning to which teaching is subjected.

As far as the curriculum has been concerned, the task has been to investigate its content, form and function.

Viewed in a historical perspective (the curriculum and its counterparts in the elementary school sector from 1878 until the comprehensive school curriculum 1969, Lgr 69,have been analysed as part of the project), the Swedish curricula have evolved from a very detailed specification of subject content (expecially as regards religious knowledge and the other nuclear subjects) to increasingly generalized directions. The first curriculum for the comprehensive school (Lgr 62), however, still included detailed provisions concerning content, plus exhaustive methodological directions for each subject. It also included an extensive "policy" section of general goals and reasons for the curricular focus. The directions contained by the 1969 curriculum (Lgr 69) in these respects were of a more general nature, even if they are taken to include the curricular supplements. (The present project ends at Lgr 69, but the curricula analysis is continued in another context.)

The analysis can be summarized as follows (Svingby 1978, p. 209):

> "... the curricula have been developed in such a way that
>
> - comprehensive school curricula define the goals of teaching in less and less detail
>
> - the boundaries between different subjects are less distinct in the latest curriculum
>
> - the methodological directions in Lgr 69 are less 'methodological' and more 'ideological'
>
> - more space is occupied by ideological sections."

Employing Bernstein's terminology, one can describe these developments as a transition from "visible" control in the early curricula to a partly "invisible" control in Lgr 69. The general goals and directions in Lgr 69 are based on invisible educational practice, i.e. teaching across subject boundaries, the personal development of the pupil is placed in the forefront, priority is given to interest.

But the administrative rules, e.g. time schedules and syllabi, express visible pedagogics. These are based on subject divisions, which are supported by a division into subjects, teaching qualifications, the award of marks etc.

In the directions concerning teaching methods and in the sections dealing with the purpose of instruction, decriptions are frequently employed which put one in mind of "invisible pedagogics". The pupil's own experiences and needs are held out as the basis on which content is to be selected and achievements rated, the teacher's role as a leader is toned down and the pupil's own participation in decision making and responsibility is highlighted. The qualities emphasized are of such a kind that they make it more difficult for the pupil to discover the demands which are made to discover the true hierarchy and the social control which exists in reality.

Thus in certain respects the preconditions given by Lgr 69 are definitely weak, while in other - and crucial respects - they are strong. This means that the curriculum combines recommendations concerning invisible pedagogics, relating to the content and method of teaching, i.e. internal work, with provisions concerning the outward preconditions of teaching which more often point towards visible pedagogics.

In this context we may note how the content of the official intentions has changed with the passing of time in the curriculum and other official texts. The early curricula were based on the idea of education as a variable dependent on social structure and development. This is clearly expressed, for

example, in material from the 1940 Schools Commission, from whose report the following excerpt is taken:

> "Being taught means learning to obey, to obey leaders, to observe rules... Only if one learns to obey is it possible to learn to lead, to have authority over others. This is the dual objective of schools: to train pupils in obedience and leadership". (SOU 1946:3, p. 92.SOU = Swedish Government official Reports).

A different approach is enshrined in the first curricula of the comprehensive school (Lgr 62 and Lgr 69), an approach which began to be challenged during the second half of the 1970s. Education is regarded here as an independent factor, a creative force which actively transforms society. Another Schools Commission expressed this view, for example, in terms of personal development. The foremost task of schools was to "develop free individuals to whom co-operation is necessary and gratifying" (SOU 1948:27, p. 1). The policy resolution heralding the experimental introduction of an integrated senior level was also accompanied by statements concerning schools as a factor of social change.

The implications of change

The desirable focus of change (in the mid-seventies) can be summarized as follows on the basis of official documents.

Working procedures

- less "chalk and talk", more group work and individualized methods
- more investigation and experimentation
- projects, co-ordinated spheres of interest
- more utilization of the pupils' experience and interest as a starting point for instruction
- greater pupil participation

Content	- emphasis on basic knowledge and skills
	- pupil-centred rather than subject-centred teaching
	- emphasis on the process rather than actual knowledge
	- emphasis on personal development
Organization	- decentralization
	- special instruction
	- flexible pupil groupings
	- teaching teams
Teaching materials	wider concept of teaching materials
	the library as a resource
	[illegible]m

This summary does not purport to be complete, but it does indicate the direction. As can be seen, it incorporates contradictory tendencies.

Teaching in six middle-level classes has been studied in greater detail with reference to the official focus of school development. The classes selected have been described by a local education authority (LEA) as positively transformed in a desirable direction. Closer study of the teaching in these classes, however, revealed great differences between them with regard to the above specified points. At first sight, for example, working procedures in all classes but one appeared to be in line with the above criteria. For example, there was more than an average amount of group work or individual work, there were "projects", work was geared to the pupils' own interests, instruction drew on and utilized reality outside the classroom. But the content and import of teaching were found to vary a great deal. Space will only allow me to quote one example.

Two of the classes had a very large proportion of group work (roughly 50 per cent of their time) and did a great deal of

project work. In both classes the group work topics/projects were chosen by the pupils themselves, but there were still striking differences between the classes.

In one class, content was first defined by the sections of the textbook and then according to the personal - and often very limited - interests of the pupils. The opportunities of expanding and deepening problems were not taken. For example, studies of Latin America in this class were made to concentrate on the exciting subject of blood-sucking vampires, gigantic trees and gold-bedecked Indians, while the consequences of the European colonization, the political situation, the economic exploitation of natural resources etc. did not arouse any interest in the projects.

The other class used its teaching materials to about the same extent (roughly 35 cent of the time) but in a completely different way. The textbook was hardly used at all in the projects except as one of many sources of information. Newspapers, interviews, reference works etc. were the principal sources of information for such projects as Israel and the Arab States, Destruction of Environment and Profitablitiy, and The Great Discoveries. The textbook was used for individual or paired training in basic knowledge or skills.

Much the same applies on other points. A superficially uniform adjustment to "progressive" teaching conceals great differences in content and, accordingly, in the implications for the pupils. A more detailed account of this study will be presented in a report appearing during the spring of 1981.

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